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The deeply Jewish
Roots of the so-called
“Self-Hating” Jew

The current war in Gaza, which the International Court of Justice has ruled that in it Israel is plausibly committing genocide against the Palestinians, has been accompanied by ideological propaganda aimed at securing political support for Israel and suppressing opposition against it. This propaganda has torn apart the space of public discourse in many places in the West, especially at universities at which traditionally free speech has been upheld. This includes leading universities such as the ivy league in the United States, especially Harvard. Two ivy league presidents have already resigned in relation to this matter from Harvard and from the University of Pennsylvania. This paper examines the Israeli propaganda narrative that anti-Zionism is antisemitism. This flies in the face of the fact of orthodox Jewish groups denying the claim and claiming instead that Zionism is not the same as Judaism. These orthodox Jewish groups also claim that the exile and suffering of the Jewish people is part of God’s plan that hasn’t been finished yet. In this paper, I wish to point out that there is an ancient strand in Judaism that interprets the Akedah (Abraham’s offering of his son Isaac on Mount Moriah at God’s command in Genesis 22:1-15) precisely in these terms. This ancient tradition was taken up by the Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas after World War II, drawing on the Talmud on Ezekiel 11:16. I also include the interpretation of a synagogue floor mosaic dating to the fifth century CE. The point here is that the charge that these orthodox Jewish groups and Jews who hold similar views are “self-hating” Jews or do not represent true Judaism does not stand historical scrutiny.